12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 OI20 Tiwi OI20

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Fig. 15. Weather-worn poles mark the grave of someone long dead but not forgotten

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bush. He bin die long time ago." This had been his country while alive and it was still his country, for his spirit remains near the grave and still hunts the wild animals and birds, while the spirits of his wives collect the wild yams, and his little spirit children play in the bush. Bangri will share this food with others who come, and their *mobudities*, should they die and be buried in the country, for as long as his name is remembered, and until his grave-posts rot with the passing of time.

123

But Bangri was not cooperative. The next day the hunters found little game in the bush and the women turned to the laborious job of digging six-foot holes with a stick to obtain the small yams that are to be found at this season. Again the grass was too thick, the snakes too cheeky, and Albert advised against our going bush. I decided the more logical explanation was that Albert considered we ourselves had ample food, and besides he was sincerely worried about his long run of bad luck. But he left with the others that

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12:Goodale E-5 (1954) 1957 O120 Tiwi O120

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Fig. 17. "Hunting a possum"

It was soon overtaken by Albert who killed it quickly with a blow from a stick. As he brought it back he said, "Him big mother. See him pickaninni." And he held up a hairless baby barely three inches long, its eyes still closed, but very much alive. "Oh, kill it quick, Albert," I begged. He shook his head, "I can't kill him, I too sorry alonga him." Here we were at an impass, two people too sorry alonga him; one too sorry to kill it, and one too sorry to let it live. Who was right?

Meanwhile, Agnes took the mother possum and pulled the fur from a small area on the belly and then slitting the skin with the sharp end of a broken stick, she withdrew the gall bladder and intestines. "Him make him bad," she explained. We did not stop to cook the animal, but continued our search. This area had all been burned by the previous parties and already little delicate shoots of grass were poking up through the black ground.

During the next hour we wandered slowly through the bush and, although we saw many trees which had been inhabited by possums, they were now empty. One that looked most likely was hollow and Albert hopefully built a fire in the rotten base, then sat back and waited for the smoke to drive the animal out. After half an hour, it was quite obvious that no one was at home.

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Then our luck turned. This time, when Albert gave the "come here" call, it was because he had located a wild honey nest, or "sugar-bag," high in a large stringy-bark eucalyptus. There was little point in cutting this large tree down so Albert prepared to climb. First he cut a small sapling and laid it at a 45-degree angle against a crotch where the massive trunk split in two. Then, grip-